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Pakistan hopes for diplomatic end to Yemen standoff

- FO says Islamabad advocating peace and diplomacy between allied Gulf states
- Confirms Pakistan-India prisoner, nuclear list exchanges amid strained ties
- Asks India to share details of Dulhasti-II project under Indus treaty

By Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office said on Thursday that Pakistan was seeking a diplomatic resolution of the dispute between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over Yemen, underscoring Islamabad's push for dialogue as tensions persisted between two of its closest Gulf partners.

The comments, which were the most categorical since the start of the Saudi-UAE row about Pakistan's role in defusing tensions, came during the weekly media briefing by FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi, who said Islamabad was actively engaging both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to encourage restraint and diplomacy.

"We have been advocating peace and diplomacy to reach a solution. So, this is part of our exchanges that is taking place between our leadership and the leadership in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi," Mr Andrabi said.

Tensions peaked on Dec 30 when Saudi Arabia carried out air strikes on Yemen's southern port of Mukalla, targeting what it said were weapons and armoured vehicles allegedly supplied to the Southern Transitional Council (STC). No casualties were reported.

Abu Dhabi later announced a voluntary pullout of its remaining counterterrorism units the same day.

Thus far, Pakistan has pursued carefully balanced diplomacy.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Dec 30 in Rahim Yar Khan during the Emirati leader's private visit, officially focusing on bilateral ties but widely viewed as urging de-escalation. A day later, PM Shehbaz spoke by phone with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Separatists to let Saudi-backed govt forces into held areas: Page 12

Mr Andrabi said Pakistan was pursuing the issue through multilateral forums as well, including the UN Security Council.

At the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, he added, Pakistan advocated "for peace, dialogue, role for diplomacy, including peaceful settlement for a Yemeni-led, Yemeni-owned political process".

"So, this is in that spirit that we take our role as a mediator and a facilitator for bringing peace and prosperity for Yemen and for the brotherly people of Yemen," Mr Andrabi said.

Exchange of lists

Meanwhile, Pakistan and India

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NEW YORK Mayor Zohran Mamdani places his hand on copies of the Holy Quran — held by his wife Rama Duwaji — as he is sworn in by New York Attorney General Letitia James during a ceremony held at the historic City Hall subway station.—AFP

PM's aide offers another way out of political crisis

- Rana Sanaullah says PML-N, PTI, PPP and 'fifth' stakeholder need to sit down to build confidence
- Calls on opposition party to withdraw Feb 8 protest call
- Dogar says letting Achakzai meet Imran in jail can pave way for talks

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Amid no headway on the proposed dialogue between the government and the opposition, Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah said that "confidence-building measures" between the leadership of the PML-N, the PTI, and the PPP could bring down political temperatures.

Speaking to *Geo News* on Thursday, the PML-N leader said the negotiations between the top leadership as well as a "fifth" stakeholder were crucial to finding a way out of the current crisis.

"Two of them are my leaders, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif. The third is President Asif Ali Zardari, the fourth is [incarcerated PTI leader] Imran Khan, and everyone knows who the fifth person is," Mr Sanaullah said.

Though he did not name anyone, the reference ostensibly alluded to the military establishment — being a major stakeholder in the process.

In 2024, the PML-N stalwart had made a similar proposal, but at the time, he had only named three leaders — the elder Sharif, Mr Zardari, and Imran Khan — saying that the three bigwigs must sit together for political reconciliation.

PTI leaders return without meeting party founder: Page 3

On Thursday, however, he said efforts at the level of leaders like him and PTI's chief whip in the National Assembly, Malik Amir Dogar, would continue. But until confidence among the top leaders was established, the political situation would not see a breakthrough.

Mr Sanaullah added that confidence-building measures would be possible only when social media accounts propagating a hate campaign against the army and its leadership were shut down.

"Though the PTI leadership cannot evade responsibility [for these accounts] … They have to disown them," he said, adding that

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Mamdani sworn in as NYC mayor

NEW YORK: Democrat Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as New York City's mayor in the first minutes of the New Year on Thursday, at the historic City Hall subway station, kicking off a term that will be closely watched by both liberal backers and conservative opponents.

Mr Mamdani chose the subway station for his swearing in to reflect his commitment to New York workers who keep the city running each day, his transition team said. The station was decommissioned decades ago and is accessible only a few times a year through guided tours.

NYC's new mayor: Editorial on Page 6

"Happy New Year to New Yorkers, both inside this tunnel and above," said Mr Mamdani, who took the oath by placing his hand on copies of the Holy Quran, held by his wife, Rama Duwaji.

According to *The New York Times*, two of the holy books were his family's, while one belonged to Puerto Rico-born Black writer Arturo Schomburg.

"This is truly an honour and a privilege of a lifetime," he said, after being sworn in by New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is best known for successfully prosecuting President Trump for fraud.

Later on Thursday, he is scheduled to take part in a larger, ceremonial inauguration with speeches from left-wing allies Senator Bernie Sanders and congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Around 4,000 ticketed guests are expected to attend the event outside City Hall. Mr Mamdani's

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70pc of all households have internet access: survey

By Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: The government on Thursday unveiled the country's first-ever digital Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES), noting that connectivity has surged as internet access is now available to 70 per cent of households, while the share of individuals using the internet has increased to 57pc.

The Ministry of Planning said the HIES 2024-25 field operation, conducted quarterly and covering 32,000 households, was completed in June 2025.

Key findings of the survey, an IMF conditionality to complete before Dec 31, 2025, were presented at an event chaired by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and attended by top officials of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and other stakeholders.

Digital access

According to the survey, household internet access increased from 34pc in 2018-19 to 70pc. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded the highest household penetration at 77pc, while

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ON OTHER PAGES

Enforcement on Karachi's 'deadly roads'

A deadly accident, which claimed the life of a woman motorcyclist on Rashid Minhas Road, barely registered amid the glut of traffic-related fatalities that dominated headlines in 2025. But the incident encapsulated the lethal mix of Karachi's traffic crisis: reckless driving, excessive speed, crumbling infrastructure, and weak enforcement of traffic laws, which have become the hallmarks of the city's roads. **Page 13**

SITUATIONER

'Drone swarms' tested KP police limits in 2025

- Officials say militants' use of quadcopters to target installations will only grow
- Except for Peshawar and Bannu, law enforcers in most districts saddled with 'ineffective' anti-drone guns

By Umer Farooq in Peshawar

AS UNMANNED aerial vehicles — or drones — become ubiquitous in modern battlefields, their use by militants in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has given them an apparent edge over the police, who are currently using anti-drone technology to intercept 'swarms' of quadcopters.

For decades, Pakistan has been fighting against militants, particularly in KP, utilising all available resources to defeat an invisible enemy, which relies on guerrilla tactics for deadly and unpredictable strikes.

After years of reliance on suicide bombers, gun-and-bomb attacks, and improvised explosive devices, in 2025 militants increasingly turned towards 'drone warfare' to evade authorities and to inflict maximum damage.

Experts believe the impetus for this shift in strategy stems from the Russia-Ukraine war, where drones have played an effective role, particularly in targeting installations deep inside the enemy territory.

In response to the drones, the police deployed anti-drone guns in multiple districts across the province and subsequently two anti-drone systems in Peshawar and the restive Bannu district.

Country witnessed 34pc increase in terrorism in 2025: Page 12

IGP Zulfiqar Hameed said 76 quadcopter attacks were foiled by the police using anti-drone guns, fearing such attacks will grow in the days to come.

The problem is that the anti-drone guns can only jam one or two drones at the same time and to bypass these guns, the militants have shifted towards 'drone swarms', making it difficult for the law enforcement agencies to counter multiple quadcopters at once.

"After providing the anti-drone guns, militants started attacking from multiple sides. This is a technological war, and they [referring to militants], have now reduced the IED, VBIED attacks," the KP police chief told *Dawn*.

He said the police did not operate drones to target militants and as of now, their role remained defensive.

Anti-drone systems

As militants found a solution to the anti-drone guns, the police eventually deployed two anti-drone systems in Bannu and Peshawar, which, officials claim, were most effective in countering the swarms of unmanned aerial vehicles.

According to the data collected from several sources, 320 such attacks took place in Bannu

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